

Here we go again

Residents pile sandbags high to protect homes

By Seth Truscott
Nisqually Valley News

Water was more than plentiful this week, but residents of Smith Prairie Road in Thurston County are getting more than their share.

Smith Prairie residents dealt with rising ground water this weekend that invaded their back yards and flooded their homes.

Volunteers with the Washington Conservation Corps arrived at Smith Prairie Monday to help residents sandbag against flood waters.

It took just six hours for flood waters to run down Smith Prairie Road into Tom Bemis's property, surrounding his residence with an unwanted moat.

"There's three and a half feet of water out there," said Bemis, who managed to drive his pickup down his now-underwater driveway to get into his house.

The water came up to his floorboards.

The high water flooded his kennel and threatened his dogs, and

buckled in the door of his garage.

"The water did that," Bemis said. "The water pushed it in."

"Yesterday at noon, when I left, there was just a mud puddle in the driveway," he said Monday. "I came back at 6 p.m., and it was like this."

A few doors down, past lowland submerged fields, the Jansen family put together a 300-foot pipeline that's pumping water out from under their home into what was formerly a private road. Now, it resembles a small lake.

The Jansens used a tractor to create a dam to keep floodwaters from inundating their home.

"There's nowhere for the water to go," said resident Deirdre Jansen. "The ground is saturated, so it's going to sit on top and create these huge ponds," like the one in her backyard.

"We came home from church, and this was like this," she said.

"It's extremely stressful," Jansen said. "My kids don't know where



Washington State Conservation Corps volunteers help homeowner Deirdre Jansen sandbag at her Smith Prairie residence Monday.

"We're going to go if the house floods. They're extremely worried."

"This happened to us last year.

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With his term

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Kimball on tea

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There is a new Replacing the former Chief Cr stepped into the al election in 1

Kimball, as County Sheriff said he is fam still is plenty

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Nisqually Valley News, Friday, January

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FLOODS: Residents pile sandbags

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while building the home," Jansen said.

"I'm really upset," said Jansen. "I feel let down by the county. We knew the whole thing is a ground water hazard. But we had no idea this was going to fill up and spill over."

Bemis and Jansen both said they believe the flooding has something to do with a nearby 500-acre clearcut.

Bemis said he was told that his property is not part of the flood plain and that it had never flooded there.

Bemis has lived at the site for two years, and said he was very surprised at the deluge in his yard.

The level started dropping Monday after Bemis sandbagged a nearby ditch on his property, slowing the water that's entering his front yard.

"We've slowed it down here," he said. "In the last hour, it's dropped several inches."

There's not much you can do about the weather, Bemis said.

"I'm not going to say I've been through worse," he said.

Sandbagging volunteer parties visited several residences

on Smith Prairie Road, organized by the Thurston Volunteer Center.

Drivers who navigated deep puddles at intersections in Rainier, Yelm, and Roy sent up huge plumes of spray.

"We just had our traditional little lakes," at Center Street and Highway 507, Rainier Public Works director Ron Gibson said. "As soon as the rain stops, it goes down."

At one point, Gibson said, Rainier received an inch and a quarter of rain in an hour. During that kind of downpour, the puddles develop fast downtown.

"Keep an eye on the weather report," Gibson said. "Be cautious at intersections and anywhere it could be over the road."

"The key is to slow down," he added.

The Southeast Thurston fire districts received some flood calls from Cougar Mountain area, as well as a Tipsoo complaint.

"It's a little harder on the older folks, to do sandbagging," Hutcheson said.

"We've definitely had more rain, more snow, and a lot more wind than I can remember," Hutcheson said.



Taking advantage of rare water levels in Y Andrus pulls in his canoe after floating down

SANDBAGS ARE AVAILABLE:

- Fire station 2-1 on Mill Road in Yelm,
- Fire station 4-3 on Vail Loop,
- Fire station 17-2 at Lake Lawrence
- Nisqually Pines.

Sandbags are provided by the Thurston C Management Department, which delivered them t Residents do not need to call ahead if they ne "Take them if you need them," said Southeast Rita Hutcheson. "We've got more weather comin

success on a way to cele on efforts, but es to enhance the Nisqually volunteers are L ss is set for Jan. lle and a plant- one Creek near is planned for

e information ty or to volun Perry, volun- tor, Nisqually , 360-438-8687, e-mail to dpre- g

Photo provided
Investigators recovered the burned-out hulk of a van, stolen last week in a burglary at Rainier School District, in rural Thurston County.